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BOOK REVIEWS

How the French Boy Learns to Write. By ROLLO WALTER BROWN.
Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1915. Pp. ix+260.
\$1. 25.

That teachers of English in American schools can learn much from methods employed by the French in instruction in the mother-tongue is the confident assertion with which Professor Brown of Wabash College submits this adequate survey of French classroom methods. The book, based upon the author's observations, presents the courses of study, an illuminating discussion of ideals of rhetoric and composition, an outline of the aims in foreign-language study, and closes with a chapter on the application of some of the features in America.

One lesson in administration is taught by the French practice, that is, that instruction in the mother-tongue may be much improved by a more judicious distribution. The value of training in expression is greatly enhanced by beginning such training early in the pupil's school life, and by maintaining it regularly and persistently throughout the entire period of instruction. The French boy does not come to the point where he leaves behind him unrelated language-lessons to take up theme-writing; he does not leave behind him reading-lessons to take up literature. From the first day to the last he is learning French as a unity. The French untiringly insist upon systematic practice and regular, skilfully graduated progression. Their unified school system, uninterrupted by divisions into primary and secondary departments, is considered an element favorable to systematically unified instruction.

In composition work there is very much instruction in what have come to be considered in America accessory branches. Formal instruction is given in enlarging and organizing vocabulary, in sharpening the feeling for distinctions between shades of meanings. Part of the reading hour is set aside for word discussion, but words are never studied apart from the ideas they represent. Grammar, too, is considered and taught as an essential element of a pupil's equipment for effective expression. Simplified and vivified though it is, yet grammar, real grammar, is dovetailed into the study of literature. A lesson in literature thus becomes the basis, not only for appreciative reading, but for the study of words, of syntax, and rhetoric as well; and to this end such selections are made that they may be set up before the boy as wholesome examples to follow.

The study of foreign languages, Latin especially, is made subservient to thoroughness in the mother-tongue. The French idea is not that they are producing Latin or English or German specialists; but they do believe that of all studies foreign languages can give insight into the French language.

Translation is not entirely relinquished, for some regard is had for exact and creditable translation.

In the presentation of composition work we may learn that prevision in the assignment is of greater value than revision of the theme. Much more reliance for improvement is placed upon enriching and organizing the material before the theme is written; much less reliance is placed upon criticism and correction. We gorge our educational journals with symbols, systems, and schemes for theme-correction; and then we assign an exercise by saying, "Write a three-page theme on childhood recollections." We are afraid to suggest ideas for fear the pupil will use them. It is not enough to have given the boy instruction in the proper use of his tools for effective expression; it is equally necessary to have given him something vital and interesting and well within the scope of his treatment for expression. To this end the French teacher is unrelenting in his zeal to have prepared definite material in the mind of the boy before he sets him to the task of writing; and the art of theme-correcting has not developed to the marvelous extent it has in America.

The book is attractive. Logical in its arrangement and comprehensive in its scope, it presents in readable style Professor Brown's observations.

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Learning to Earn. By JOHN A. LAPP and CARL H. MOTE. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1915. Pp. 421.

The authors have contributed to the literature on vocational education a readable compilation and interpretation of current thought and opinion regarding this much-discussed field of school training. While this opinion is buttressed by facts and figures, the book is essentially a presentation of a philosophy of education.

Like most writers on this subject the authors are critical of the present educational program. At times the criticism seems to be extreme, though undoubtedly it may be deserved in some quarters. For example, in the chapter on "Training for the Home," the following occurs: "In the elementary schools, girls learn the rudiments of reading, writing, and arithmetic, a little about world-geography that means nothing, a bare outline of American political history, a mass of meaningless jargon about English grammar, none of which is intelligible or usable, and a few disconnected facts about human physiology, which, for all practical purposes, might be the physiology of some extinct animal of the antediluvian age. The high school and college merely pursue the search for facts begun in the grades, facts which have nothing whatever to do with the commonest interests of the girl after she has become a woman." There is much material of this character which is calculated to stimulate discussion among school people.